

GUIDE

Publication of the Paulist Fathers

NEW ROLES FOR THE PARISH

An integrated parish program to meet present-day needs of Catholics and their non-Catholic neighbors.

Louis F. McKernan, C.S.P.

THE PARISH PATTERN

Priests in increasing numbers are examining their "parish pattern" to see if it fills today's needs.

Michael Furlong

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IT SEEMS TO ME

The Conversion of Our Country

Robert Hugh Benson, in a paper on the Conversion of England, began by contending that "the slowness of the Church's progress toward that end . . . springs from the timidity of her members toward desiring it seriously."

The conversion of a single individual, not to speak of the conversion of a nation, is a highly complicated affair and it entails numerous elements. Ignore these elements and you simply court failure. Obviously, proper dispositions on the part of the non-Catholic are requisite. But there are also necessary dispositions on the part of Catholics that will affect enormously the number of our converts. And one might well ask if the Catholic body in our land seriously desires the conversion of this nation.

How often is the subject raised in Catholic pulpits? In how many parishes is a program for welcoming inquiring non-Catholics solidly established? How adequately are our future priests, teaching nuns and parents prepared to meet their unique opportunities to assist in spreading the Faith? Is the Faith something merely to be protected and not also something to be shared?

There is no doubt that things have considerably improved especially within the last decade. But it still remains a dreary fact that the apostolate toward non-Catholics lags behind most of our other apostolic movements. And this will continue so long as American Catholics as a body fail even to desire seriously the conversion of our neighbors.

"A Catholic receives," says Frank Sheed, "the gifts of truth and life that the Church has to give him, through Christ our Lord. Is he in a kind of anguish at the thought that there are others who know nothing of these gifts and are not receiving them? . . . Is he as much concerned at that fact and conscious that he ought to do something about it, as he would be if he heard that fellow creatures lacked bread?"

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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New Roles For the Parish

Louis F. McKernan, C.S.P.
interviews Joseph B. Gremillion

As a youthful pastor in Shreveport, Louisiana, Father Joseph B. Gremillion established an ambitious program of adult education in his parish which had an unusually high concentration of college graduates.

In 1955 he attended the White House Conference on Education, and this experience led him to evolve a new concept of what the modern American parish could achieve. Philosopher Jacques Maritain suggested that he keep a diary, and the result was a book, *The Journal of a Southern Pastor*, (Fides, 1957). Then last fall, after fifteen years of practical experience in the parochial ministry, Father Gremillion was sent by his bishop to Rome to "study" the social sciences at the Gregorian University.

Father Gremillion readily admits there is no panacea, no definitive solution for all the pastoral problems of the Church today. But what he says about the goals of parish life is undoubtedly pertinent to many parishes in different parts of the country.

The apostolate at St. Joseph's in Shreveport was a team project, and Father Gremillion's associate for eight years, Father Marvin Bordelon, succeeded him as pastor. Father Gremillion's successor has organized seventeen "little" parishes within the parish on a neighborhood pattern. Last fall he conducted two philosophy classes with forty people in each, while his assistant taught a course in theology to a class of fifty. Recently, daily Mass-goers were learning the Latin responses ordinarily made by the server at Mass so as to participate more directly in the Mass according to the recent Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites (Sept. 3, 1958).

What do you think is "different" about the modern suburban parish?

First of all, the predominance of young people. Young married couples prefer the suburbs as a better place than the city for bringing up a family.

Secondly, not only the actual distance but the psychological and social distance of suburbia from the "Irish" neighborhood, the "Italian" neighborhood, and the first generation "urban" immigrant mentality.

Thirdly, the frequent contact of Catholics in suburbia with their non-Catholic neighbors.

And finally, the high percentage of college graduates in many suburban communities.

What do you think these young people want from their local parish?

They want a great many things. The parish can loom very large on their suburban horizon. These young people feel a need for many things the traditional parish in the U. S. has not been accustomed to providing. These things are not being provided because in many cases the structure of the modern parish was determined by the needs of the grandparents or great-grandparents of the present generation. And of course when suburbia mushroomed overnight all anyone seemed to think of was the immediate problem of building a school, convent, church and rectory.

What are the needs of today which you feel the parish will have to meet?

In Shreveport we discovered that the average college graduate is not much interested in bingo, benefits, athletics, or even in teaching catechism. He shuns the usual Catholic organizations in the old-fashioned parish because he feels that these organizations are insulated against the realities of the outside world and the problems of the community as a whole.

I myself feel very strongly that the mission of the Church is not just to develop piety in individual souls, but to introduce

Courtesy of THE CATHOLIC WORLD, 180 Varick St., New York 14, N. Y. May, 1959.

Christ into the local community, and incarnate Christ into our society and institutions.

How would the parish go about trying to do this?

In Shreveport we had a parish of seven hundred Catholic families in an upper middle class, white, suburban area. The economy was more Texan than Old South, much more "Bible Belt" than French Catholic. There are, for instance, only 50,000 Catholics in the northern half of Louisiana as against 500,000 in the southern half of the state. The men of the parish were geologists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, corporation executives, educators, bankers, realtors, sales managers, and retailers.

We took a survey of the parish (including in it the non-Catholic men whose wives were Catholic and whose children were being brought up as Catholics) and discovered that 60-75 per cent of the men of the parish had been to college. Immediately we knew we could not run the parish as though these men had only been to kindergarten. Then too, we discovered that only 12 per cent of those who had been to college had been to Catholic colleges. Hence, I felt there was a need for parish adult Catholic education.

In other words, you felt there was a new need for the parish to function as an educational force in the community?

Exactly. As I pointed out in *The Journal of a Southern Pastor*, French-settled Catholic Louisiana particularly, tends to play down the Church's social teachings. The spiritual and the temporal have been divorced. Sunday Mass has little to do with Monday morning business, long-established social customs or matters that have become political issues. Therefore, we tried at St. Joseph's many different projects to stimulate in our parishioners an intellectual awareness of the practical implications of the teachings of the Church, the social teachings especially.

This sounds like a mighty big undertaking—where did you start?

First, I tried to spot ten potential leaders: men in the 28-40 age bracket. I purposely selected busy men. I found that they all had a great interest in problems such as

the race question, labor, divorce, slum clearance, RTW laws, big business, and the U.N., yet they had no way of becoming conversant with the social teachings of the Church or current "Catholic" opinion on these subjects. They were acquainted neither with the encyclicals nor with Catholic magazines, and, of course people today are under pressure not to read.

What did you do with these potential leaders?

I tried to cultivate them personally. I visited them downtown where they worked, trying not to interfere with their work, but I wanted to know what they were doing eight hours a day, so as to better understand their problems. I came to appreciate the hard and exacting work many of them were engaged in. I came to admire their creativity. I learned about oil wells. I learned what a turntable was, and bottom hole pressure. I felt that this was important knowledge for me, because as a priest and pastor I was the link between these men and Christ. Then I organized these men into a group.

What was your program then?

We met every two weeks for about two years. We started with the problems they were most interested in, worked back to principles, and quickly learned that the principles were either not known or not understood.

I encouraged them to buy copies of Cronin's *Catholic Social Principles*, and subscribe to various Catholic periodicals, especially *Social Order*, published by the Jesuits in St. Louis.

Did this group ever accomplish anything concrete?

I think they did. They had been hand-picked, and soon they began to affect the thinking of the local K. of C., the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Of course, solid accomplishment is not always accompanied by "success." One lawyer who had previously believed that human rights were granted not by God but by the Courts ran for public office and was defeated because he refused to line up with the segregationists.

What was accomplished by this small

group encouraged us to try the same kind of thing with a larger group, and we inaugurated our Sunday night "soirees."

What did you discuss at these "soirees"?

We picked subjects of current interest. Sometimes we investigated philosophical questions or examined the current applications of Christian "humanism."

Our speaker would hold forth for 30-40 minutes and then we would have 90 minutes for discussion, interrupted by a short coffee break.

One night, for instance, a psychiatrist, a mother, a college professor, and two teenagers participated in an enlightening discussion of parent-child relations. At other soirees we studied the current philosophies of education and government, the causes of labor strife and social tensions, the plight of tenant farmers and migratory workers, the impact of housing, welfare programs and hospitalization plans on the homes of the community.

We even discussed world affairs.

Do you think that this "intellectual" program had any effect on the non-Catholics of your parish?

I am sure it had an indirect effect, but I think we tend to overstress the idea of converting people intellectually.

At St. Joseph's we receive about 20-30 converts into the Church each year. However, in spite of the fact that I believe we should pay some attention to ways and means of reaching the non-Catholic mind, I think we ought not to forget the heart.

What do you mean—heart?

I mean that we can make the non-Catholic feel at home in the Catholic community long before he seriously considers becoming a formal member of the Church.

We look down our noses at the Protestant concept of "extending the right hand of fellowship"—we forget that it's much more than mere human fellowship or camaraderie. It is a Christian ideal of charity which must be activated in the Mystical Body.

Notice how "approachable" Christ is in the Gospels.

And you would make Christ in the parish more "approachable"?

Yes. For instance, we hold our inquiry classes for prospective converts in what we proudly call the parish living room.

From the very beginning I felt that the parish needed an adequate, homelike meeting place, where there would be comfortable chairs, a modest library, magazines, a coffee bar and an informal atmosphere that would produce a sense of companionship and being-at-ease. It is important to make the prospective convert feel at home even before he becomes a formal member of the Mystical Body through his reception into the Church.

In this respect, a longer catechumenate is necessary today. This is the role of the parish: to attract and dispose the non-Catholic who lives within the parish bounds.

Can you explain this a little further?

Yes. When we took the survey of our parish, notice that we counted in the non-Catholic partners in mixed marriages. We refused to consider them as outsiders, who were no direct concern of ours.

In line with this, we made Baptism an important celebration in the lives of the families of the parish. We encouraged couples to invite non-Catholic friends and relatives to the conferral of the sacrament, and we used the new ritual, trying to make some commentary on the significance of the sacrament and the sacramentals connected with it.

The priest standing at the door of the Church on Sunday greeted the non-Catholics who had been at Mass, and all our sermons, announcements, organizations such as CCD, in fact the entire orientation of the parish, let the non-Catholic relatives, friends, and neighbors of our people know that we regarded them as our parishioners too, and they therefore were the objects of our solicitude and love.

You apparently believe that the parish has a definite responsibility for the non-Catholic living within its bounds?

Yes, I most certainly do. In our parish in Shreveport over half the couples living in the parish were involved in mixed marriages. This meant that there was always a number of non-Catholics at Mass on Sunday.

In view of this fact, we felt that the Mass could be used, as it was in the early Church, to instruct the "catechumen." We felt that the liturgy could be used to educate these non-Catholics as well as our own parishioners.

We not only encouraged the congregation to use the missal, but we went on to teach our parishioners to participate actively in the liturgy by means of the so-called "dialogue" Mass.

Were your parishioners interested in the liturgy?

We found that they were hungry for this sort of thing. They were extraordinarily anxious to "participate," and of course this was advantageous for us, because we could use participation in the liturgy both to instruct our parishioners and to give them a feeling of "belonging" to the Mystical Body.

How did you teach your parishioners to participate in the "dialogue" Mass?

Nine years ago we introduced the "community" Mass, taking eleven men and training them as a speaking chorus to recite the prayers of the Missal in unison, and with volume sufficient to lead a hesitant congregation.

At Mass the people learned to recite in Latin the short responses such as "*et cum spiritu tuo*" and "*Deo gratias*." Then, using their missals, they learned to recite (in English) all the parts of the Mass which the choir sings at High Mass in Latin, such as the *Gloria*, *Creed*, etc.

Then we trained "lectors" who would read the parts of the Mass such as the *Introit* and *Collect* and *Epistle* which change with the day. These would be read to the congregation in English while the priest was reading them in Latin, and the lectors incidentally were trained to read intelligently and with conviction.

How long did it take you to teach the people to do all this?

It took several years.

Once we had trained the speaking chorus of men and the lectors, we distributed several hundred copies of Father Stedman's *Sunday Missal* to the congregation, and during the time usually given to the Sunday sermon, we instructed the people, bit by bit, to participate in the Mass.

When the original speaking chorus and the original group of lectors had been instructed, they recruited and trained additional members of the chorus and new lectors.

How did you manage the psalm at the beginning of Mass and the Confiteor?

We did not try these in Latin, so we had the lector recite in English the words said by the priest and the congregation responded with the English translation of the words said by the server at Mass.

In other words this was a kind of dialogue between the lector and the congregation, corresponding to the dialogue at the beginning of Mass between the priest and the server?

Yes, and this is one of the drawbacks to the "dialogue" Mass. The dialogue seems to be between the lector and the congregation, rather than between the congregation and the priest.

Not that this is really true, or that it strikes people this way immediately, but you have to analyze impressions like this. That's why I'd prefer to speak of the "community Mass" rather than the "dialogue Mass." It's not a dialogue of "two," but the joint worship of parishioners, priest and Christ, united in the Mystical Body.

How often did you have the "community Mass"?

At two of the scheduled Masses every Sunday.

Then on weekdays during Advent, from Christmas to the Epiphany, during Lent, throughout the Easter season and the novena before Pentecost, daily Mass-goers were treated to a five minute homily during the 6:15 a. m. Mass. This homily would be based on the text of the Mass of the day.

Since these people already had a great closeness to the Sacrifice we felt that the dialogue was not as important for them as was this extra thirty minutes of instruction each week.

How has your "community" Mass been affected by the new Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites about the liturgy?

Our congregation had been engaged in the first degree of direct lay participation

in the Mass envisioned by the Instruction, i.e. they were making the easier liturgical responses in Latin.

I understand the daily Mass-goers are now being trained to say in Latin all the responses the server makes. This is the second degree of participation specified by the Instruction.

What about the use of English in your version of the "community Mass"?

According to the Instruction "direct" lay participation in the Mass means the Latin recitation of some parts of the Mass, but the Instruction allows and encourages "indirect" participation by the laity through English prayers which present the meaning of the Mass prayers and hymns in the vernacular, provided they are in complete harmony with the individual parts of the Mass.

There has been a fairly complete com-

mentary on the Instruction in *Worship* magazine. The Holy See apparently envisages a great variety of forms of participation.

Do you think there will be a trend toward "direct" lay participation in the Mass?

Certainly, the new Instruction from Rome indicates that the community Mass is becoming the "normal" thing.

What do you think is going to happen to the parish in America?

I am convinced that a more dynamic and far-reaching concept of parochial responsibility is going to evolve in response to the needs of the Church. The average parishioner today is influenced more than he knows by the secular society around him, and it is the responsibility of the parish to restore Christ and His ideas to the lives of its people.



The Parish Pattern

By Michael Furlong

American pastors seldom write about their work. They lack the time, or the inclination, or both, and most of them are not, in any case, willing to unveil to the reading public their own pastoral speculations and private soul-searchings. There are exceptions, like Father Leo Trese, the author of *Vessel of Clay* and other books, who found it possible for a time at least to be both a working pastor and a very

articulate expositor of the pastoral and priestly life. But he had the field practically to himself.

This unavoidable or deliberate reticence on the part of American priests is regrettable. Not only are we deprived of much entertaining reading, but a more general exchange of ideas and experiences could be very useful. A good example is *Journal of a Southern Pastor* by Father J. B. Gre-million (Fides, \$3.95). This book is in part an account of a new parish and how it grew, under imaginative management. It is also an unstudied, kaleidoscopic display

This most illuminating survey of the American parish is reprinted by courtesy of *The Commonweal*. Issue of September 20, 1957.

of a pastor's thoughts about his job, thoughts that are fervent, expansive, anxious, searching and unfinished.

The pastoral function cannot be defined once and for all. It is variable and expandable, from time to time, from place to place. This last statement will sound breezy and inane to the priest who was recently called to my attention because he has eighteen hundred families in his charge and not so much as a tent in which to assemble them; his is strictly a brick-and-mortar assignment, certainly, at least for the moment. Another pastor of my acquaintance has his church and his school, but he is looking frantically for a few reasonably literate young women to fill in the gaps in his teaching staff. One way or another, the basic essentials can exhaust a pastor's ingenuity, resources and time, although there is some difference of opinion as to what are the basic essentials.

But after these basic essentials are decided upon and brought under control, a pastor confronts a wide choice of possible additions to his parish program. Shall he devote himself to youth or adults? To adult education or a practical liturgical program? Should he provide a library? What about the C.F.M., the sodality, the Holy Name Society, the public high school kids, the census? Should he work harder to make converts? Should he devote more time to the sick? The P.T.A.? A man cannot do everything, and these are a few of the possible choices he must make.

A STABLE PARISH OPERATION

By comparison with the problems of many present-day parishes, I think the parish to which I was affiliated at the age of three weeks some fifty years ago was a simple and stable, if not downright staid, operation. The elementary school proceeded on an even keel. There were four Sunday Masses, confessions once a week, a ready response to sick calls, provision for baptisms and marriages and funerals. There were a couple of lay organizations with modest programs and limited membership. For several years there was a parish baseball team. There were the periodic bazaar and mission, the one for supplementing revenue, the other for recovering backsliders and stirring up the devout a bit. Souls were being saved, unquestionably;

also unspectacularly. The people were given pretty much what they wanted, and for the most part they allowed custom and the mind of the pastor to define their wants. Lay initiative? It was not altogether lacking. Yet I can remember only one important project of lay inspiration which gathered any steam at all. This was the parish gymnasium, which got so far as to be discussed once or twice at a general meeting before it was laid to rest with decorum and finality.

NEW PATTERNS

The parish pattern is not altogether different today. Change is neither universal nor sudden nor uniform. But change there is, of one kind or another. Some of it flows out of the more profound ideas we have of the Church and the Church's function; these ideas eventually get down to the level of the working clergy. Some quick changes have come from the practical rulings of the Pope regarding Mass, the fast before Communion, the celebration of Holy Week; a neighboring parish, for example, has a couple of hundred people receiving Communion every evening at a six o'clock Mass.

Some changes in the patterns of our parishes are due to shifts in population. The vacuum in town created by the movement to the suburbs suggests a strenuous mission effort, often quite successful. In the suburbs themselves the centrifugal stampede means a quick demand for buildings and services, but also a lot of fresh starts with eager, adaptable people and a natural sense of community. The exhortations of the Popes and the better education of the laity persuade some pastors to share ideas, responsibility and decisions with their people. Some are trying to give their congregations a more active and intelligent share in the liturgy.

One bishop who despaired for the moment of breathing life into a few somnolent parishes wondered out loud recently whether the parish was on its way out; whether there was any use in placing our reliance on the parish for the future. But he was not really very serious. The Church gets quite a few things done outside the parish, and not as much as might be desired inside, but no one has come up with a substitute for the parish structure. Outside the parish are higher education, the

*Perhaps the majority of non-Catholics fear
the Catholic Church and resent its authority.*

Catholic press, most welfare agencies, social action groups, the training of priests and religious, and a few other things. That still leaves to the parish the chief responsibility for the caliber, vitality and growth of Catholicism.

True enough, some city parishes resemble service stations. They lack all aspect of community, but at least they provide people, sometimes many people, with the sacraments, and they have their place. Of course, if they were to become the dominant type, if pastors generally should content themselves with the role of distributing grace, via the sacraments, to such as come, we would be in for a serious slump. Fortunately, however, the trend is in the opposite direction. Some may not be aware of this fact, because they live in a parish where everything proceeds with mechanical precision, even as in grandfather's day. But move around a little, and you will see signs of thoughtfulness, adaptation to the needs and possibilities of the times, and new and vital experiments involving the people in intelligent roles.

REALIZING FULL POTENTIAL

Father Gremillion bears witness to this more ambitious pastoral outlook. He is not typical, yet his frame of mind is not unique. There are others who presume with him the fundamental business of building and operating and paying for church, school, rectory and convent. Though few, if any, do so as completely, there are others, too, who inform their people on the physical and financial progress of the parish. (The fund-raising companies have taught us the psychological soundness of involving the people actively, thoroughly, intelligently in financial drives.) But Father Gremillion is uniquely frank in revealing the additional matters which burden his mind. How can the middle- and upper-middle-class parish realize its full potential? How far can the laity be introduced to the riches of Catholic doctrine and Catholic life? How can they be delivered from mediocrity and led

to genuine holiness? How can one remove their blind spots and prejudices? How fully can a parish, chiefly through its laity, serve the outward thrust of Christ's Church into our contemporary world?

I am not suggesting that these questions constitute the dominant theme of rectory conversations throughout the land. Nevertheless, they are on the minds of not a few priests, and at least a few pastors—more or less clearly formulated. The thinking behind the questions is the subject of innumerable magazine articles, and is part of the premise of the new lay groups. Something is in the wind.

Without doubt, much of this ambitious, questioning, open-minded mood stems from the more profound concept of the Church which has emerged from papal documents and theological treatises during the past few years. In his *Lay People in the Church*, Father Yves Congar has recounted how this new self-consciousness has developed inside the Church. Until very recently, it was the habit of writers on the Church, in seminary manuals and popular catechisms alike, to put all their emphasis on the juridical institution and neglect the idea of supernatural community. The divinely established teaching and ruling authority of the Church, centered in the Pope and the bishops, was under attack; it had to be defended. By contrast, *Southern Pastor* recurs often and easily to the notion of the Church as the Mystical Body. It is hard for some of us to remember that the encyclical on the mystical body is only fifteen years old, and that thirty years ago this magnificent doctrine rated only a page in our seminary textbook. Today *Mystici Corporis* is as necessary to any serious thinking on the Church as is the parish car for going on sick calls.

Pope Leo XIII set us back to Thomism, where the Church is described, very briefly, to be sure, in terms of Head and members. St. Pius X set the Church the goal of restoring all things in Christ, and by his stress on the liturgy he opened our eyes to the Church's most exalted activity and her

greatest source of vitality, from which the laity too should draw light and inspiration. Pius XI hammered away at Catholic Action, essentially a recognition of the laity's responsible, positive function in the Church—a point long obscured, while "the Church" was identified too exclusively with the hierarchy. Pope Pius XII, finally, has brought us a long way toward a more profound and balanced understanding of the nature and purposes of the Church, with a long series of addresses and letters, crowned by *Mystici Corporis* and *Mediator Dei*. Beyond his predecessors he has enhanced the place in the Church of the laity, who "ought to have an ever more clear consciousness, not only of belonging to the Church but of being the Church, that is, the community of the faithful" under Pope and bishops. As a result of Papal teaching at the top, pastorals and remarks of bishops on the next level, some pioneering theological studies a step below, and a good deal of popular writing about Catholic Action and the like, we are gradually coming to see the Church not only as the fixed, authoritative establishment "out there" but as a living, thinking, loving, praying, growing unity encompassing us all.

NEW IDEAS AT WORK

This new, comprehensive view of the parish, I grant you, is a long way from being the common property of Catholics. It is, necessarily, in the background of *Southern Pastor* and of many a pastor's approach to his job. In the foreground are the practical realities of his situation—financial problems, managing a million-dollar property, staffing the school, the inescapable demands on his time by matters both petty and important, the obstacles provided by the habits of his people, their aversion to change, thought and responsibility. A man with ideas could conceive all sorts of valuable activities and developments in his parish—if he had unlimited help and resources. Practically, he has to choose. But new ideas are at work.

Beyond the staples of parochial activity, Father Gremillion has, for his part, made some interesting experiments in setting up lines of communication with his people. He has faced up to the great stumbling block—the racial problem—and tried hard to make his people see what is demanded of Chris-

tians. But he has devoted much of his energy to a broad program of adult learning, original and ambitious—his "Collegium" and allied activities. Explaining his choice, he notes that most of his people have secular college educations and very little knowledge of things Catholic. Yet their intellectual potential is high, and they have an apostolate to the non-Catholic community. One important way they can begin to exercise this apostolate is by bringing non-Catholics to participate in the panels and discussions of the Collegium—which includes in its investigations science, art, and literature, as well as philosophy and theology.

No two parishes are exactly alike. A pastor needs discernment in setting up his extra-canonical activities (canon law doesn't ask very much). It seems to me that whatever else he contrives to accomplish, he should in every case set out to acquaint his people with the liturgy, instructing, explaining, exhorting, giving them an increasingly active, intelligent and satisfying part in the Sunday Masses and in the extraordinary celebrations that take place throughout the year. This is the very heart of a fully realized Catholic life, as we have been told, off and on, for fifty years. It is also the key to lay participation in every other phase of the Church's work—the family apostolate, the social apostolate, the intellectual apostolate, the apostolate of conversion, the penetration of Christ into our own lives and into the life of the world around us.

The Church today can accomplish much more—though not everything—at the parochial level than it did in grandfather's day, when its passive flock grazed in restricted pastures. We are becoming conscious of what the status of the laity should be, and of their considerable potential. Who knows what an aroused laity can accomplish, by way of helping the pastor and branching out into new activities? There is, of course, no quick way to unlock this potential. It will require a lot of laborious formation, and various kinds of motivation can be employed. But the main impetus will be derived from an active, intelligent participation in the liturgy. From this will come the light and inspiration and strength that are needed to make our parishes what they should be.

Guide Lights

INQUIRY CLASS SURVEY . . .

Toward the close of the National Conference on Convert Work held in Washington last October, questionnaires were distributed pertaining to inquiry class procedures. Due to a crowded conference schedule and then the excitement of departure, it is understandable that only 32 of these forms were fully answered by the delegates. These replies represent only 25 per cent of those who attended all the sessions. However, since they come from priests who are particularly successful in conducting classes in all sections of the country, their replies throw a revealing light on many aspects of this phase of our apostolate.

Number of questionnaires completed: 32.
Information Centers: 7. Parochial Inquiry Classes: 25.

1

Those who conduct two or more inquiry courses concurrently (meeting on different days or different times in the day): 14 (45%).

Advantages of two or more concurrent courses: opportunity for inquirers to choose a more convenient day or hour; wider choice of instructors; easier to arrange make-up classes.

Disadvantages: press of other duties renders it impossible where one priest does all the convert instruction. Meeting room space or auditorium not available more than twice a week.

2

Courses that meet once a week: 11. (Of these, 3 courses cover two catechism lessons on that one night, divided by a ten minute break).

Courses with two lessons a week on different nights: 18 (55%).

Courses that offer a choice of lessons on either one or two nights a week: 3.

Courses with some morning classes: 11 (35%). Night workers and mothers find morning classes more convenient.

Most popular nights for courses meeting twice a week: Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday.

Most popular night for classes held once a week: Tuesday or Thursday.

Most popular hour for classes: 8 P. M.

One parish holds classes on Saturday and Sunday at 11:30 A. M., because of the number who prefer a non-working day.

The vast majority of these courses are geared to an average adult audience of average intelligence and education. Special attention is always directed to non-Catholics in a mixed marriage.

3

Attendance at these classes varies widely. Principal reasons: the size of the community; the number of available courses in the vicinity; where inquiry class is long established a parish is apt to be more convert minded; degree of co-operation of all parish societies; relative interest of special groups like Legion of Mary, CCD, Convert Club etc.; degree of lay participation as co-instructors.

Average attendance in a parochial class: 45 inquirers.

Total number of individual inquirers who attended at least one lesson in courses provided by twenty-five parishes: 1,500.

Courses where number of inquirers increased: 60 per cent.

Number of inquirers who complete the course: 60 to 90 per cent. (21 [85%] of these parochial courses report that 75 per cent complete the course).

Widest divergence is revealed in number who are actually received into the church: 35 per cent to 90 per cent of those who finish the course.

4

Place where parish classes meet: parish hall, 10; class room, 8; rectory, 4; other places, 3.

Extent of lay assistance in parish courses: co-instructors, 4; clerical assistance, 13; home-visitors, 9; receptionists, 4; secretary, 4; no lay help, 6.

Information Centers report an average of 55 people in each class. Attendance always increases as the course progresses. Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ complete the course and $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of those are actually received into the Church.

Three centers utilize the assistance of co-instructors. Four centers employ the Legion of Mary. All of these centers find lay participation of one kind or another

indispensable: receptionists, librarians, clerical workers, etc.

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"I believe parishes in an area should co-operate in convert work, especially regarding days and hours for classes. More inquirers would be accommodated if different parishes provided and publicized either morning classes, various evening classes, and week-end classes."

"Non-Catholic parents of children in parochial school should be persuaded to take the full course of instruction."

"Two or more priests in the same parish might co-operate in convert work. This would lighten the burden for all and would provide variety."

"Why are we so reluctant to employ the laity in the actual work of instruction? Missioners in the Field Afar regard the lay catechist as indispensable. Units of the CCD or Legion of Mary have manifested their competence in this work."

Many parishes provide short socials after the lecture, often with refreshments, from two to five times during each course. This introduces a note of informality, enables priest and lay workers to know the inquirers better, and provides inquirers with an opportunity to meet each other. Some priests believe we lose many interested inquirers simply because of the stiff, cold, impersonal manner in which courses are conducted.

"Play appropriate background music before each class."

"Continue to ask the school children to pray for the success of the class. They will win rich graces. And their interest in the class will exceed that of their parents. Incidentally, there is no better way to make our future adult-Catholics convert-minded."

TEAM WORK . . .

The return to the Church of Diana Barrymore, a few months before her death, represents an excellent example of fruitful co-operation between layman and priest. The 38-year-old daughter of the late John Barrymore had been an extreme alcoholic for 20 years. Last year, Miss Barrymore appeared in the Chicago production of Tennessee Williams' "Garden District." There she met and became the good friend of Air Force Capt. Walter Dakin Williams. He is a convert to the Church and a brother of the playwright.

The actress revealed to the Airman that the plays of his brother were, by their insight and compassion, a means of helping to cure her. In her book, "Too Much Too

GUIDE

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Soon," she relates the tragic and lurid details of her moral collapse. She was greatly impressed by the fact that the Captain was not only a deeply religious man but a convert to Catholicism. When free from duties at the Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis, he acts as a co-instructor at the Catholic Information Center in St. Louis where Father Jerome W. Wilkerson is director.

Discussions on religion and some serious reading about the Church's care of sick souls revealed Catholicism to her in a new light. In time, Miss Barrymore was eager to meet a sympathetic priest. Previous efforts to return to the Catholic Faith had proved futile.

Through Captain Williams she flew from Chicago to St. Louis where a meeting was arranged between the actress and Father Wilkerson. The priest discovered that she was baptized a Catholic but had had very little instruction in the Faith. An absence of Catholic home life, shuttling from one school to another, had resulted in three invalid marriages and dissipation that was nearly her moral and professional ruin.

After consulting with Father Wilkerson she returned to the Sacraments and began a home study course in religion under his direction. Her interest in the Church was profoundly sincere and grew ever deeper. And during the past summer she was in touch with the St. Louis priest frequently by phone and correspondence.